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BEST PRACTICES INITIATIVE

Report of the Secretary-General

The present document provides an overview of the Best Practices Initiative, since its inception at the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee, followed by Decision II/7: Criteria for nominating and selecting best practices of the second session of the Preparatory Committee. It describes: (i) the processes used; (ii) the results achieved; (iii) the lessons learned; and (iv) follow-up activities. The report also responds in part to Decision II/5 of the second session of the Preparatory Committee requesting the Secretary-General to prepare, inter alia: "feasibility studies for the financing and establishment of international support programmes proposed and initiated during the preparatory process to implement the objectives of the global plan of action, with particular emphasis on ... promoting the sharing and learning of best practices and establishing a leadership training facility".

Document CRP 3 provides an annotated bibliography of the Best Practices 100 List as determined by the independent Technical Advisory Committee and endorsed by the Jury.

Annex I provides an overview of support provided to the Best Practices Initiative.

Annex II provides a summary of substantive lessons learned.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Best Practices Initiative (BPI) was officially launched as part of the preparatory process for the City Summit at the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II, held in Geneva in April 1994. The initiative was conceived as: (i) a means of forging a positive vision of an urbanizing world by focusing the world's attention on practical solutions to some of the most pressing social, economic and environmental problems facing an urbanizing world; (ii) as an integral part of the preparation of national action plans and reports for Habitat II; and (iii) as a capacity-building exercise. Guidelines were issued by the secretariat to this effect.

2. One year later, the Initiative had captured the imagination and energies of a broad cross-section of civil society with over 300 submissions from over 50 countries. Substantial support was provided by bilateral and multilateral donor agencies to help developing country organizations to prepare and submit their best practices. This evolution prompted the second session of the Preparatory Committee to adopt Decision II/7 which further elaborated guidelines for submitting best practices, called upon national committees to organize national competitions/exhibitions and requested that the secretariat organize an independent jury with a view to giving special recognition to the most deserving practices.

3. Decision II/7 endorsed three basic criteria for nominating best practices including: (i) positive and tangible impact on improving the living environment of people; (ii) partnerships among at least two, or possibly more key actors; and (iii) sustainable impact including changes to, *inter alia*, legislation, regulatory frameworks, by-laws or standards, social policies, sectoral strategies, institutional frameworks and decision-making processes.

4. The following report provides an overview of: (i) the process used; (ii) the results; (iii) the preliminary lessons learned from the Initiative; and (iv) ongoing and proposed follow-up activities. Annex I provides an annotated list of the Global Best Practices 100 List. Annex II provides an overview of support provided to date to the Initiative and its follow-up programme.

II. ANCHORING THE PROCESS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

5. One objective of the Initiative was to design a process which, in itself, would constitute a best practice in terms of broad-based participation, partnerships, stakeholder involvement and effective and efficient use of resources. These principles guided the Initiative from its inception, as follows:

(i) *Broad-based consultations* were held throughout the process with governments, United Nations agencies, local authorities, NGOs/CBOs, and the private and professional/academic sectors to: (i) define the nomination criteria for best practices; (ii) develop guidelines for use by national committees and submitters of best practices;

(iii) devise a unified reporting format for submissions; (iv) design the structure and user interface for the best practices database; and (v) establish a strategy for follow-up action.

(ii) *Networking arrangements* were established to provide support to developing country organizations. Financial support provided by bilateral and multilateral donor agencies was channelled through a network of field offices of United Nations agencies, local and regional experts, consultants, training and capacity-building institutions;

(iii) *Public-Private Partnerships* were established for the Awards for Excellence for Best Practices in Improving the Living Environment, and to disseminate the best practices, as called for by the Preparatory Committee. Conventional means of information dissemination were utilized as well as new forms such as the Internet, CD-ROM, and computer diskettes.

The Capacity-building Process

6. Significant in-cash and in-kind support was mobilized from multilateral and bilateral sources, most notably by the Governments of the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Germany, the World Bank, the Municipality of Dubai, UNICEF, UNDP and UNV. In-kind support involved direct support provided by, inter alia, national governments, bilateral donor programmes, United Nations agencies and other organizations and institutions to assist organizations in submitting their best practices, in organizing local, national and regional competitions and/or exhibitions. In-cash support was used by the secretariat to: (i) constitute a core team to disseminate the guidelines; (ii) raise funds; (iii) provide substantive feedback and back-stopping to national committees and best practice submitters; (iv) provide financial support to national committees through a network of national and regional experts, training and capacity-building institutions. Direct support, including financial and technical advisory services, was provided by the secretariat to over 50 national committees and organizations actively engaged in submitting their best practices. Annex I provides a list of contributors to the Initiative and the number of recipients of financial and technical support.

Selection Process and Criteria

7. Further to Decision II/7 of the Preparatory Committee, the secretariat undertook the organization of an independent and transparent classification and selection process. Owing to the number of submissions, it was decided that a pre-selection would be undertaken by an independent Technical Advisory Committee, consisting of human settlement and development specialists. The Committee was charged with the task of selecting from over 600 submissions the Best Practices 100 List and, from those 100, a short list for the Jury. All other best practice submissions were categorized as "good practices". The Committee met in Rotterdam, 26 April - 1 March 1996, with the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies acting as its secretariat. The short list of selected best practices, together with the Committee's report on the methods used and its recommendations, was submitted to an independent Jury,

convened on 28 and 29 March 1996, hosted by the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Both the Committee and the Jury were regionally balanced and gender sensitive.

8. The selection of award-winning best practices took as its departure point the two themes of the Habitat II "City Summit": Adequate Shelter for All, and Sustainable Human Settlements Development in an Urbanizing World. Decision II/7 of the Second Preparatory Committee outlined the three substantive criteria for the selection process: (i) Impact - a positive and tangible impact on improving the living environment; (ii) Partnerships among at least two of the following actors: national government, local authorities, international agencies, NGOs/CBOs, the private sector, media, the academic and scientific community, professional associations and civic leaders; and (iii) Sustainability as evidenced in changes in legislation, social policies, institutional frameworks and decision-making processes and management systems. The Dubai International Conference recommended that the following considerations be added to complement Decision II/7: (i) inspirational leadership; (ii) promotion of accountability and transparency; (iii) empowerment of people; (iv) acceptance and responsiveness to social and cultural diversity; (v) the potential for transferability and replication; (vi) appropriateness to the local conditions and the promotion of social equality and equity.

The Dissemination and Learning Process

9. In conformity with the decisions of the Preparatory Committee, the dissemination process was conceived as a means to: (i) raise awareness of the issues of the Habitat II Conference by focusing on practical solutions in the areas of shelter as well as a wide range of social, economic and environmental problems associated with urbanization; (ii) promote the learning and sharing of experiences. The following dissemination and learning activities were organized:

(i) Guidelines: 2,500 copies of guidelines were distributed in the official languages;

(ii) Media and press coverage: Over 500 best practices stories, reports, videos and articles were reported on international, regional and national television and radio, and in newspapers and magazines in all major regions of the world. Global networks participating in this campaign include Arabsat, BBC, CNN, Christian Science Monitor Radio, a consortium of Arab-language newspapers, City journal, Los Angeles Times, and others;

(iii) The creation of a discrete Corporate Best Practice Initiative in partnership with the Progressio Foundation in the Netherlands to mobilize private sector involvement and awareness;

(iv) An International Conference on Best Practices for Improving the Living Environment was organized and hosted by the Municipality of Dubai, 19-22 November 1995. The Conference featured a selection of 28 best practices; 910 participants from 95 countries participated in the Conference. The Conference resulted in the

Dubai Declaration which contained, inter alia, a commitment by Dubai Municipality to sponsor the awards for 5 years and substantive suggestions, considerations and recommendations for improving the nomination and selection process;

(v) An International Conference on "Water for Thirsty Cities", hosted by the Chinese National Committee for Habitat II, in Beijing, 18-22 March 1996, focusing on, inter alia, best practices in water resources management;

(vi) The organization of 50 national, regional and local competitions and/or exhibitions on best practices;

(vii) The production, in partnership with the Together Foundation and with the support of the Kellogg Foundation, of an electronic catalogue of best practices accessible though the Internet, on CD-ROM, on diskette and an abbreviated version in printed form;

(viii) The establishment of an electronic conference on best practices on the Internet;

(ix) The production and distribution of a television special on best practices in partnership with Cable News Network (CNN), World Television Network (WTN) with an arrangement for distribution to developing country networks through the Television Trust for the Environment (TVE); and

(x) The organization of a Best Practices Exhibition, including the Best Practices Video Forum and Best Practice Partners Meeting Space at the Istanbul Conference.

III. THE RESULTS

Quantitative Results

10. By 15 March 1996, the secretariat had received over 640 submissions from 91 countries, organizations and associations. Over 40 national competitions and/or exhibitions were organized and one regional competition was held with the sponsorship of the Inter-American Federation of Construction Industries. Of these 640 submissions, 425 were submitted before the initial deadline of 1 December 1995 which was later extended to 31 January 1996, although many more were submitted during the third session of the Preparatory Committee in February 1996.

11. A total of 46 submissions dealt effectively with gender and women's issues, including areas such as access to shelter, land and resources, jobs and revenue-generating opportunities and legal rights. Over 100 submissions had included gender analysis as per the recommendations contained in Decision II/7 of the Preparatory Committee.

12. Eighty-five Best Practice video films were submitted and will constitute the foundations of a video library on Best Practices.

13. Of the above, 102 best practices made the 100 list, as per the recommendations of the Technical Advisory Committee. These best practices will be featured in the electronic catalogue.

14. Of the 101, the Technical Advisory Committee selected a short list of 43 submissions which were forwarded to the Jury. The Jury subsequently chose 12 to be given special recognition in the form of the Dubai and Tokyo Awards for Excellence for Improving the Living Environment.

Qualitative Results

15. One of the most salient features of the case studies submitted is the number of practices which are little known to sectoral and geographical experts working in human settlement and development. This leads to the conclusion that national committees and other organizations involved in the identification and submission of best practices were successful in mobilizing the broad-based participation called for by Resolution 47/180 and echoed by the Preparatory Committee.

16. Another feature of the case studies submitted was the holistic approach adopted by many communities, cities and regions in tackling a wide range of issues. In many cases, the social and decision-making processes which were used to solve a particular problem were found to be equally effective in addressing other issues, leading ultimately to new and improved forms of and institutional arrangements for management and decision-making. The lessons learned from the analysis of these best practices underline the compelling necessity to compliment the largely sectoral divisions of policy-making and implementation with new and improved forms of participatory decision-making and resource allocation.

17. The vast majority of the case studies further demonstrate that when holistic and participatory approaches are adopted and institutionalized, they result in substantial resource mobilization, especially amongst the poorest communities, cities and countries.

Integrating Gender Considerations

18. Integrating gender considerations was one of the objectives of the Initiative endorsed by the Preparatory Committee. The secretariat has received over 46 best practice case studies with a gender and/or women's perspective. Many of these case studies have been submitted by NGOs/CBOs with the financial assistance of the Governments of the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway. The secretariat has also requested that submitters of best practices include a gender impact analysis of their case study in efforts to draw out the impact that both men and women had at all stages of a project, programme or initiative. Over 100 best practice case studies complied with the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee in undertaking gender analysis.

19. In partnership with other United Nations agencies, national and local Governments and the NGOs/CBO community, the secretariat is in the process of analysing these best practices with a gender perspective and/or impact analysis to identify the methods that groups and individuals use to ensure the success of a project. The secretariat expects that the development of a

gender assessment methodology specific to human settlement and development will enable gender considerations to be taken into account at the planning stage of a project.

20. The Dubai International Conference on Best Practices in Improving the Living Environment, 19-22 November 1995, witnessed the emergence of a "gender caucus for best practices" which was active in ensuring a gender perspective in the discussions on the 28 case studies presented. The caucus was instrumental in including gender in the Dubai Declaration as one of the considerations for selecting best practices. It also constituted a core group of individuals ready and willing to ensure that the gender methodology is put to use in their respective area of expertise within the human settlement and development field.

21. The secretariat is continuing the collection of gendered best practices as well as continuing gender impact analysis of non-gendered case studies. The gender caucus will continue its work of monitoring the existing gender impact of best practices as well as the identification of new gender case studies. It is expected that a gender assessment methodology will be available for dissemination by December 1996.

IV. PRELIMINARY LESSONS LEARNED

22. The lessons learned from the Best Practices Initiative fall into two categories: (i) substantive lessons; and (ii) lessons pertaining to process.

Substantive Lessons

23. The substantive lessons learned are presented in Annex II of this document. They are an edited extract of the proceedings of the Dubai International Conference on Best Practices in Improving the Living Environment. They are attributable to the facilitators of the conference.

Lessons Pertaining to Process

24. The following recommendations for improving the procedural system of best practices result from observations of the nomination process in general as well as from the specific recommendations of the Technical Advisory Committee meeting:

(i) Firm submission deadlines - to ensure that all submissions can be pre-screened to provide feedback to submitters and a preliminary analysis to future Technical Advisory Committees;

(ii) Flexible reporting format - while the goal of judging each submission on an equal footing is highly laudatory, the reporting format should be flexible enough to be adaptable to the wide variety of submissions received; and,

(iii) Lessons learned - more understanding is required of the obstacles encountered, and how they were overcome, during the planning and implementation of each initiative.

V. PROPOSED AND ONGOING ACTIVITIES

25. By mid-1995, it became evident that the Best Practices Initiative would constitute a unique collection of case studies on practical, feasible and increasingly sustainable solutions to some of the world's most pressing economic, social and environmental problems. By adopting clear nomination criteria and by establishing a unified reporting format, however imperfect, the Preparatory Committee had led the way for creating an effective means of identifying, compiling, disseminating and learning from best practices. This led the secretariat to engage in a round of consultations with all key stakeholders on what to do and on how to exploit an obvious gold mine of information and experience. The unqualified results of these consultations include:

(i) The need to continue the best practices initiative as a means of awareness-building;

(ii) The need to continue the capacity-building dimension of the initiative particularly as a means of stimulating cities, communities and organizations to reflect on the processes they have engaged in and on how to scale-up, replicate and otherwise expand on their strengths and overcome their weaknesses;

(iii) The need to make use of existing networks to promote the dissemination of best practices and their use in such areas as training, management development, education, policy development, gender mainstreaming, and institution-building;

(iv) The need to expand the scope of the initiative as a tool for developing and implementing new and improved forms of cooperation, including volunteerism, North-North, South-South and decentralized forms of cooperation.

(v) The need to capitalize on the potential revenue streams presented by the development of the electronic catalogue of best practices and its value-added service as a one-stop-shop for training, capacity-building and awareness-building materials, while keeping in mind the necessity to make information readily accessible to local institutions, particularly in developing countries.

26. Additional results of these consultations included:

(i) The opportunity presented by the best practices catalogue for establishing a new roster of expertise for sustainable human settlement and development;

(ii) The opportunity presented by the best practices electronic catalogue and conference to mainstream the use of new and cost-effective means of communication between and amongst all key stakeholders, particularly in developing countries;

(iii) The need to capitalize on the fact that a set of nomination criteria and a unified reporting format had been adopted by the

international community, to rationalize and facilitate linkages between similar initiatives and databases.

27. The key areas of improvement which were identified include:

(i) Refinements to be made to the reporting format to make it easier to reflect the diversity of initiatives and their wealth of experience;

(ii) Further development of the guidelines as a tool for critical self-analysis as well as identification and reporting;

(iii) Expansion of the list of key words, including a glossary of key words, to assist best practice submitters in auto-classification and as a means of facilitating the use of key words in searching for best practices on the electronic catalogue.

28. Key strengths identified for the continuation of the initiative include:

(i) The cost-effective means used to provide substantive back-stopping and assistance to developing country organizations through local experts and national capacity-building institutions;

(ii) The effective leveraging of resources using a mix of funds and in-kind contributions from public and private sources.

29. The above considerations, suggestions and recommendations led the secretariat to establish a first-phase, three-year strategy for the continuation of the initiative. Major considerations used in establishing this strategy included: cost-effectiveness of operations, the re-orientation in the use of existing resources, and capitalizing on existing networks and institutional capacity.

Establishment of Regional and Thematic Best Practices Resource Centres

30. Building on existing networks and capacities, regional and thematic best practice resource centres will continue the work initiated by the secretariat in collecting, disseminating and analysing best practices, and to promote the transfer of experience, expertise and know-how through various means including training, education, management development, policy dialogue and improvement. Negotiations are currently being held with several partners' institutions around the world, and it is expected that 10 to 12 such thematic and regional centres will be operational by the end of 1996.

31. These Resource Centres will form part of the Habitat Global Best Practices and Local Leadership Programme - a virtual institute representing a global network of partner institutions. Each node in this global web will constitute a "centre of excellence" working in partnership with two or more key actors/stakeholders in sustainable human settlements development. Each "centre of excellence" will be anchored with a capacity-building institute or facility actively engaged in policy development, education and training. Each centre will continue to collect and disseminate information of regional or thematic relevance. It will screen the information for two end-uses:

(i) Dissemination to policy-makers and other key stakeholders within the region or, in the case of a thematic hub, within the said theme on a global basis;

(ii) Feed the global hub with information deemed of global significance and applicability. The global hub will, in turn, feed all other regional hubs.

Partnerships

32. Like best practices themselves, a Regional or Thematic Centre should be established with a minimum of two partners who were active in the Habitat II preparatory process. These actors are: national governments, local authorities and/or their associations, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, academic and research institutions, the private sector and the media. UNCHS (Habitat), which ensures overall coordination of the initiative, has established a partnership with the Together Foundation to continuously update the electronic catalogue and to make it increasingly accessible and user-friendly.

Criteria for Selection

33. To ensure the continuing high quality of best practices, each Regional or Thematic facility will be required to meet the following criteria:

(i) The facility should be known, within its region or theme, as a centre of excellence for public policy, education or training, research and development in one or more related areas of human settlements management and sustainable development;

(ii) The facility should be self-financing and in some cases will require an external partner and co-sponsor to fund activities for an initial three (3) years;

(iii) The facility should have a regular information dissemination strategy, including newsletters, reviews, journals, etc.

Outreach Role of the Resource Centres and Use of Information Technology

34. The Internet is rapidly expanding and will soon become a major channel for the exchange of information throughout the world. Through Internet, each regional centre would have access to the Global Web site. This would allow for equal access to all hubs within the global network. Other means of dissemination include newsletters, CD-ROM, diskettes and printed catalogues on Best Practices. The target audience includes policy-makers at all levels of government, city officials, human settlement professionals, the private and non-governmental sectors. The regional centres will also play an active role in promoting the use by key stakeholders of cost-effective communication and information technology.

Activities of the Resource Centres

35. The first purpose of each resource centre will be to disseminate Best Practices from around the world, and in particular from the region or theme, to interested parties at the national and local levels. However, the facility should also play a pro-active role in promoting the discussion and transfer of Best Practices. In addition, a permanent electronic forum will be used to facilitate dialogue on human settlement and development issues. Another function of the resource centres will be to identify, collect, analyse and compile, in collaboration with UNCHS (Habitat) and the other Best Practices Web sites, new submissions by individuals, organizations and governments. The regional centres will provide feedback to those who access the Web site or submit new Best Practices, update the database of Best Practices, and promote, in the region or theme, activities such as workshops, policy seminars and pilot transfer schemes. Yearly awards for outstanding Best Practices chosen by those who accessed the site will offer a useful way of promoting interest in the further development of the Initiative.

36. Coordination between the various Best Practices Web site operators can be done through e-mail. However, it is envisaged that the coordinators of the various Web sites, regional and thematic centres will meet once a year with the global coordinator to review past and on-going activities and discuss new initiatives.

Role of the Core Programme

37. The role and primary function of the core programme will be to act as a central hub. It will focus on activities of a strategic nature, such as:

(i) The continued development and improvement of the database and reporting format, based on feedback from the regional and thematic resource centres, to make it increasingly accessible to and usable as a working tool for key groups of actors;

(ii) Facilitating and promoting new and improved means of technical cooperation including decentralized forms of cooperation, including innovative multi-bilateral transfer programmes and projects, volunteer programmes and South-South cooperation;

(iii) Promote global and regional partnerships particularly with the private sector and the media for the development of by-products of the Best Practices database, for example a new roster of expertise and of sustainable products, services and technologies;

(iv) Promote interregional and global exchanges of best practice knowledge, experience and know-how;

(v) Establish joint support mechanisms, research and development, with shelter and urban indicators;

(vi) Promote the use of best practices in innovative leadership training activities.

38. A steering committee is being formed with representatives of all key stakeholders, major donors and agencies to ensure the continued user-orientation of the programme.

Concluding Remarks

39. In conclusion, the 640 case studies, be they award-winning, best or good practices demonstrate together that millions of individuals, thousands of communities, associations, organizations and cities are taking their destiny in their own hands and are contributing effectively to promoting shelter for most, if not all, and to establishing more sustainable forms of human settlement and development. The logical conclusion is that this is only the beginning and that continued efforts in identifying, analysing, disseminating and learning from best practices will contribute significantly to the reaching of the objectives of the Habitat Agenda, and the goals of the Habitat II Conference - that of making the world's cities, towns and villages healthier, safer, more equitable and sustainable.

Annex I

Overview of Support Provided to and by the Best Practices Initiative

Source of Funding/Type of Expenditure	In-Cash	In-Kind*	Total
Netherlands Core programme, Gender BPs, TAC meeting, Developing country BPs, videos	499 000	60 000	559 000
Spain Core programme, Latin American BPs, translation, dissemination in Spanish, LAC competition	470 000		470 000
Dubai Municipality Developing country BPs, videos, press, media Awards, Dubai International Conference	440 000	500 000	940 000
Together Foundation** Database development and production		318 181	318 181
Norway Developing country BPs, Gender BPs, videos and core programme	226 513		226 513
Sweden Developing country BPs, core programme	140 165	10 000	150 165
Tokyo Metropolitan Government Awards, videos, jury, media	120 000		120 000
World Bank Developing country BPs	90 000		90 000
Canada Jury meeting, videos, press kits	31 980	15 000	46 980
UNDP Regional BP meetings, BP catalogue		90 000	90 000
UNICEF Developing country BPs, videos		15 000	15 000
Total	2 017 658	1 008 181	3 025 839

* Estimated.
** Including US$ 75,000 from the Kellogg Foundation.

Annex II

Substantive Lessons Learned from the Analysis of Best Practices

Lesson 1. *"For long-term commitment, public involvement must be integrated with problem definition as well as problem resolution."* Many of the cases demonstrate the importance of "asking versus telling" as a basis for effective public involvement. When people are asked to define problems and potential solutions they commit themselves to be part of the solution rather than relying on others to solve their problems. There is often fear on the part of institutional experts that by asking people what needs to be done and how best to do it, their status is somehow diminished. Most of the Best Practices suggest that the power of an institution is actually increased when the people are invited to participate as real partners.

Lesson 2. *"Planning cannot be just top-down or bottom-up, it must be both, and integrated, if it is to be effective."* Many of the Best Practices clearly demonstrate that debates on whether policy-making and decision-making should be top-down or bottom-up represent a false dichotomy. The answer is that it must be a blend of both. The relative role of top-down or bottom-up must be addressed within the context of the problems faced. In considering this question of approach we must also remember that top-down and bottom-up can be relative terms from the perspective of the viewer.

Lesson 3. *"Resources are important, but resources are not a substitute for wisdom."* The Best Practices have clearly demonstrated that the energy and wisdom of the people can solve many problems in spite of limited resources and a lack of formal training. The Best Practices we have examined also taught us that many of the problems in the developed world result directly from wealth being used as a substitute for wisdom. Wealth used unwisely can do more harm than good. Wealth and technology can provide the tools and the capacity, but not necessarily the answers. They certainly are no substitute for the attitudinal change or for the inherent intelligence of people.

Lesson 6. *"If people or institutions are to commit themselves to problem resolution they will need to see their own interests being served."* People will work very hard to improve their economic and physical security and the potential for a good life for themselves and their families. In every Best Practice the motivation for action can be found in a problem which could no longer be ignored. The solutions are anchored in individuals seeking to better their plight and where the interests of the individual were respected as much as the interests of society. One of the most important lessons for institutions and planners is that long-term success must be anchored with community support for change and based on self interest as well as public interest.

Lesson 5. *"Our definition of <u>public</u> must be much broader than those who normally participate."* These practices show us that it is not enough to create opportunities for public involvement. Providing opportunity without valuing the participation of those who are not traditionally empowered, will breed distrust and cynicism. To be truly effective it is critical that we

reach out to all members of the community and listen to their concerns and recommendations. Participation which is pretence creates anger. Participation which is sincere creates solutions and political support.

Lesson 6. *"We got into this mess one step at a time and we will get out of it one step at a time."* Perhaps the most valuable lesson learned is that it will be the small steps of empowered individuals and communities which will ultimately lead us to a sustainable world. There are no grand solutions and there is no magic cure. It is very important that we have a vision of what we want so that our actions are coherent with that vision. But the vision is not a substitute for decisions and action.

Lesson 7. *"It is often the issues which we can not talk about openly that are the most critical to problem-solving."* It is very difficult to address matters like participation, empowerment, and long-term individual commitment to change when the "isms" (sexism, racism, etc.) are too sensitive to talk about. Until we restore dignity, self expression, and the capacity of people to change their own life through their own efforts, many of these Best Practices will not become common practices.

Lesson 8. *Leadership and Innovation*: Many of the cases demonstrate that successful solutions are often born out of a crisis of culminating deprivation ... that situation combined with an enabling environment and the readiness of the general public to deal with an issue, are crucial factors in the genesis of innovation. A window of opportunity in the political process is often what motivates and interests innovators, or "product champions", to formulate an appropriate methodology to a problem. The continued involvement of a product champion or leader whether from the government, a municipality, or the people is often the key to success.

Lesson 9. *Flexibility:* These Practices show us that for initiatives to be successful they have to be flexible. Also, each of these practices benefits from a self-reflective learning process that continues to involve people in the planning and design of initiatives, and does not, in any case, follow bureaucratically modelled blueprint designs.

Lesson 10. *Impact:* The Best Practices case studies all further the goal of making cities and neighbourhoods more ecologically sustainable, politically participatory, socially equitable, and economically viable. They each resulted in a range of direct and indirect impacts on their cities and their citizens, including the enhancement of the physical environment, the reduction of poverty, the improvement of health and well being, and the empowerment of community groups and individuals - both women and men.

Lesson 11. *Scaling-Up the Impact*: Perhaps the most important long-term impact of each of these cases is that they resulted in building multi-sectoral partnerships that led to changes in the way a problem is approached and in the way solutions are arrived at. It is our hope that once these partnerships have been established, they will be reutilized in the transfer, adaptation and replication of these best practices and transform public policy. Empowering people to assert themselves and to act as catalysts is the key by which we are able to reach decision-makers, change official mind-sets and decentralize the process of problem-solving.

Lesson 12. *Overcoming preconceived ideas about urban squalor and decay:* The Best Practice cases emphasized the astonishing resilience and creativity of people in the face of adversity. Given that we have "never been there before", much of what people do, particularly in cities in the South, is improvization inspired by constructive problem-solving.

The above lessons learned are attributable to Dr. Gary Lawrence, Director of the Centre for Sustainable Communities, University of Seattle, Washington; Dr. Akhtar Badshah, Director of Programmes, Mega-Cities Project Inc.; Mr. Herbert Girardet, Footprint Films; Dr. Jo Beall, Lecturer, London School of Economics. They have been abridged by the secretariat.